

Summary Notes for Catalog Records

INTRODUCTION

A summary note is a brief description of a resource. In most formats, it is an optional note under AACR2, but it becomes especially important when contents cannot be easily examined, as in videos, motion pictures, sound recordings, and electronic resources. It is a rich source of keywords for electronic retrieval through MARC field 520.

There are only a few formal instructions for style and content of this note. AACR2 provides the following advice: Give a brief objective summary of the content of an item [...] unless another part of the description provides enough information (Chapters 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). While the note usually uses one subfield, subfield a, USMARC allows subfield b for expansion. There is also provision for a display constant that labels the note Summary, Abstract, or Review. The note can be repeated when there is more than one piece to be described or when it is useful to include summaries in several languages.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL FORMATS

The summary note in the MARC bibliographic record provides a brief, concise description of the material in hand. The summary needs to be objective, avoiding any interpretation or evaluation. It is usually best written in phrases rather than complete sentences, using familiar language. The use of slang, colloquial terms or jargon is not advisable. The style should be in active voice and in the present tense. It helps keyword searching and retrieval to include more specific terms, names of people or characters, etc, that are not present in the description, or to include synonyms of controlled vocabularies in the summary note. If the geographical area or time period is known, include that information in the note.

The summary note contains the basic, essential details about the content of the item, such as the nature of item, its point of view, scope, and purpose. This

description may also include information which usually would be entered into its own MARC bibliographic tag, such as the audience, educational level, or award. If the inclusion of this information clarifies the summary, use the facts in the summary note instead of in the additional note field. The repetition of information from other parts of the bibliographic record is not necessary.

In addition to these general guidelines, several formats have additional specific characteristics to include in the summary note. The following explores some of these specific characteristics.

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF MATERIALS AND COLLECTIONS

Motion pictures and videorecordings

- Rewrite the description from the container or accompanying fact sheets in an objective style.
- Remove promotional and emotional language.
- Include essential aspects not mentioned anywhere else in the bibliographic record.
- Include information from other note fields for clarity.
- Include any significant technical or artistic aspects of the production.
- Show the relationship of significant persons to the work if this connection is not clear from the rest of the description.
- Identify the genre and target audience as appropriate.

Examples:

245 00 A cry in the woods |h [videorecording]
300 1 videocassette (ca. 29 min.) : |b sd., col. ; |c 1/2 in.
520 Discusses the logging vs. environment battle over the forest lands in the Pacific Northwest. Looks at the sociological impact on the families and communities involved in the logging industry.

245 00 Using your library to write a research paper |h [videorecording]
300 4 videocassettes (ca. 300 min.) : |b sd., col. ; |c 1/2 in.
520 Guides the viewer through the process of writing term papers, from

selecting a topic through doing the research to handing in the paper.

Graphic materials

- Provide an objective note describing the object.
- Explain in more detail the general material designation, or the specific material designation in the physical description.
- Include the type of material, medium and style.
- Include the significant persons, events, places and dates related to the item.

Examples:

245 00 Hidden communication barriers |h [transparency]

300 15 transparencies : |b color ; |c 10 x 12 in.

520 Describes the ethnic, ghetto, and cross-cultural protective mechanisms which often interfere with communication among people.

245 04 The Dancing skeleton |h [filmstrip]

300 1 filmstrip (73 fr.) : |b col. ; |c 35 mm. + |e 1 sound cassette (8 min.)

520 An ornery dead man refuses to stay in his coffin and causes a disturbance when the best fiddler in town comes to call on his widow.

Electronic resources

- Take the note information from the material, its introduction or first few paragraphs.
- Write the summary in a non-evaluative style.
- Include the interaction of the user with the program.
- Mention any specific effects, such as laser display or animation, used to convey the information.
- For those computer files only understood by computer software, write a brief, concise description of the purpose of the file.

Specific guidelines for **web sites** (in addition to those above)

- Include a brief statement about the other sites connected to the main page.
- Describe any unique features of the original site.
- Show how the user interacts with the web site.

Examples:

245 00 Fundamentals of physics, 6/E |h [electronic resource] : |b CD-physics 3.0

300 1 CD-ROM ; |c 4 3/4 in. + |e 1 user's guide.

520 Study aid for physics students. Contains the complete contents of the textbook Fundamentals of physics by Halliday, Resnick, and Walker as well as content from the student solutions manual and study guide. Features interactive problem solving software, simulations taken from key concepts in the textbook, and video tutorials.

245 00 Education world [electronic resource] : |b where educators go to learn

520 A search engine for educational web sites where educators can find information without searching the entire Internet. Supported by several corporate sponsors, this website offers a database indexing over 100,000 Web sites with a K-12 focus. The site includes lesson plans, directories of schools and colleges, news stories, professional development, and many additional sources of information.

Three-dimensional artifacts and realia

- Include the interaction of the components mentioned in the physical description as the items relate to context of the whole item.

Examples:

245 00 Reading fluency |h [kit] : |b the headway program : level B

300 30 fable sheets, 128 outlaw flash cards, 19 picture exercise cards, 2 printers boxes (180 cards each), 58 story sequence cards, 49 word line cards, 185 word list cards, 2 word matching games (120 cards each), 1 teacher's guide ; |c in container, 26 x 48 x 18 cm.

520 Designed to teach children to read and write independently, to acquaint children with outstanding literary selections, and to provide a meaningful correlation of all the language arts.

245 00 Dome Mountains |h [model]

300 1 model : |b col. ; |c 30 x 37 x 5 cm.

520 Shows the physical features and stratigraphic layers of dome mountains.

Sound recordings

- Exclude the summary note for those recordings that are solely musical.
- For nonmusical sound recordings, retrieve summary note information from the cassette or any accompanying description.
- Include any unique or artistic characteristics in the summary note.
- Explain the relationship of the artists or authors to the contents if not clear from the rest of the description.

Examples:

245 00 Swiss gnomes and global investing |h [sound recording]

300 2 sound cassettes (ca. 2 1/2-3 hr.) : |b analog.

520 Introduces the strengths of the Swiss banking industry, including strong rights to privacy, and a highly stable currency. Also puts forth the case for global investing in being able to reduce risk and increase returns, and discusses the techniques and insights of John Templeton, George Soros, Jim Rogers, and other experts of international investing.

100 1- Kitson, Jane.

245 10 Fabulous holiday & seasonal fingerplays |h [sound recording]

300 1 sound cassette (ca. 30 min.) : |b analog + |e 1 book (vii, 50 p. : ill. ; 23 cm.) in container 24 x 16 cm.

520 Collection of fingerplays about seasons and holidays, designed to build positive self-esteem, foster creativity and divergent thinking, and enhance oral language skills in young children.

CONCLUSION

These suggested guidelines represent an effort to bring consensus to the How? What? When? and Who? questions that need to be answered to create a description of materials that is both efficient for catalogers and useful for patrons. It is essential to provide as much information as possible, yet not overwhelm the researcher trying to decide the appropriateness of the materials. Since the 520 summary note is keyword searchable, it can not only form the basis for the formulation of subject headings and call numbers, but it can bring out keyword concepts for which adequate subject headings have not yet been established.

Excerpted from:

<http://www.olacinc.org/capc/summnotes.html>